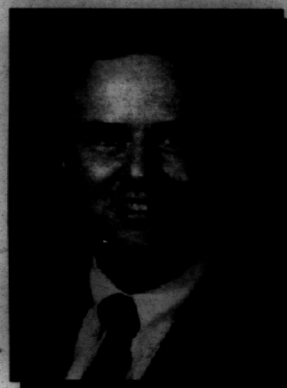
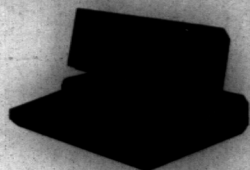






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# In search of peace

*O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see  
thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep The  
silent stars go by;*

**T**ruth is, it's been a while since the peo-  
ple of Bethlehem have been able to  
enjoy the deep and dreamless sleep  
described in the timeless tune composed in  
the 19th century by Phillips Brooks and  
Lewis H. Redner.

In our lifetimes, as a matter of fact, the  
birthplace of the Prince of Peace and the  
area surrounding it have enjoyed precious  
little peace.

Today as in the thousands and  
thousands of days that preceded it,  
there is turmoil. Ancient enemies  
square off against each other with  
modern weapons. Distrust and civil  
unrest are daily in the headlines.

Governments are toppled as  
more and more people die violent-  
ly. Hatred and blood vengeance are  
the order of the day. It seems no one  
is safe.

As we approach the annual  
observance of the birth of the Prince  
of Peace — our Lord and Savior  
Jesus Christ — it would be well to  
once again emphasize, to a world  
made anxious by human events,  
that there is only one Answer to the  
problems we have created for ourselves.

The Answer came to us 2000 years ago,  
not as an overwhelming military force or a  
powerful political figure, but as an inno-  
cent and helpless child born in the usual  
way under unimpressive circumstances to  
unimpressive people in an unimpressive  
society occupying an unimpressive part of  
the world.

The Answer was rejected by friend and  
foe alike, and died a painful and humiliat-  
ing death after a short life in which he  
owned virtually nothing of material value.

What the Answer did during his time  
with us, however, changed the world for-  
ever and split time itself.

The elusive peace we so desperately  
seek is found only in the Answer, but how  
to share the Answer with a dying world?

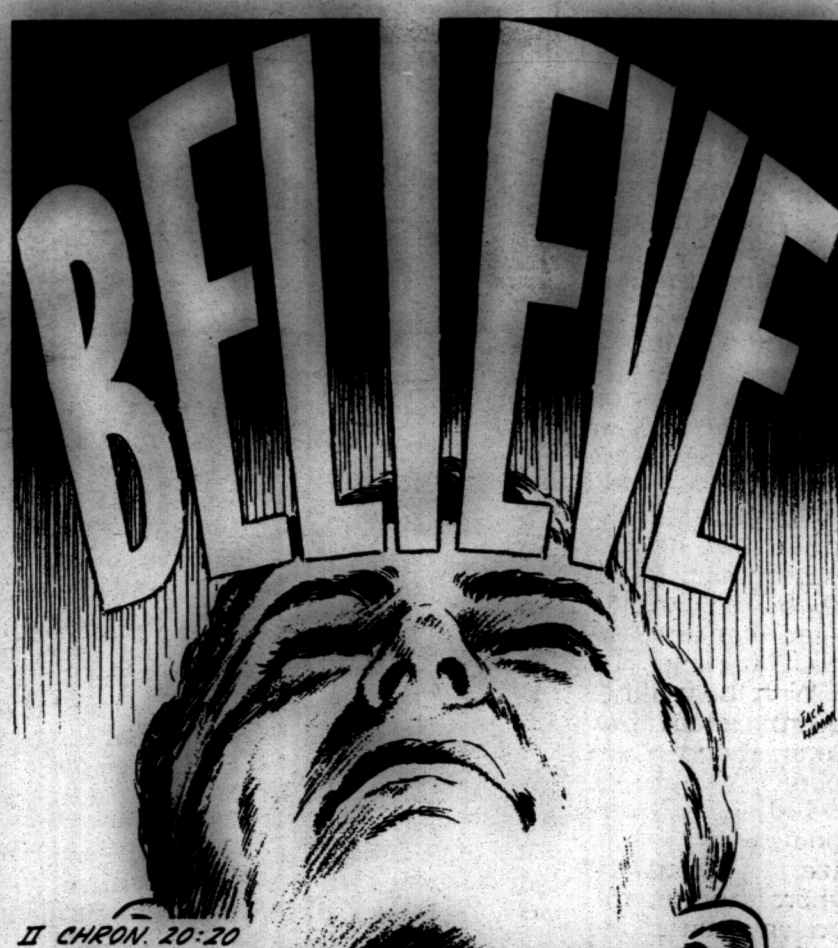
God came up  
with the perfect  
solution in Matt.  
28:18-20.

At this special  
time of year,  
should we not be  
unusually fervent  
in our passion to  
win the lost to  
Christ? Wouldn't  
this be a perfect  
opportunity for  
those of us, who  
have lost the  
burning desire  
we once had for  
evangelizing the  
world with the  
Good News, to  
regain that pas-  
sion in a bold and  
victorious way?

Yes, the mis-  
sion is so big and  
one person is so  
small, but the  
Lord calls us one  
at a time to the  
special mission  
he has in store for  
each of us.

That's the  
power of one in  
the Kingdom  
work we have  
been given.  
Everyone can  
make a difference, one person at a time.

Rulers rise and rulers fall, and most dis-  
appear from the world's stage with little  
notice. Empires wax and wane through the



II CHRON. 20:20

"BELIEVE IN THE LORD YOUR GOD, SO SHALL YE BE ESTAB-  
LISHED; BELIEVE HIS PROPHETS, SO SHALL YE PROSPER"

*No BR on Dec. 28*

mists of history, while political and cultur-  
al movements gradually slip away like  
ebbing tides.

The Answer has remained through all  
the yesterdays, and will remain through all  
the todays and tomorrows.

The Answer is eternal. The Answer is  
Jesus Christ. He is the reason — the only  
reason — we can complete the classic song:

*Yet in thy dark streets shineth The everlast-  
ing light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years Are met  
in thee tonight.*

## In My View:



### Is he the real Jesus?

*By Tony Martin*  
Associate Editor

various Santas with a critical  
eye since during my seminary  
days, I actually played Santa in  
a Fort Worth mall.

Several times daily I'd be  
asked the big question: "Are  
you the real Santa?" Savvy kids  
rightfully wonder why they  
can see three or more Santas in  
a shopping day.

I'd lean in with a conspira-  
tional wink and reply, "Shh, don't  
tell, but I'm really not. I'm just  
one of his helpers. He's awfully  
busy this time of year." That  
would usually satisfy them,  
and if it didn't, then an elf  
would hustle the little darling  
back to his or her mamma.

Santa considerations aside,  
here's another observation. Did  
the shepherds wonder as they

stood by the manger and ask  
themselves, "Is this the real  
Jesus?"

Did that tiny baby meet their  
expectations of what had been  
revealed to them by the heav-  
enly host? As the Christ child  
grew up to honorable man-  
hood, were they persuaded that  
he was the Savior?

I sure hope they were. Of  
course, there were plenty of  
folks in that day who stared  
divinity right in the face and  
didn't understand who he was.

The disciples were with him  
virtually around the clock and  
were still asking questions at the  
end. John the Baptist wanted to  
know, "Are you the one we've  
been looking for, or should we  
expect someone else?"

No, Jesus was the real  
thing, the promised Messiah,  
the Savior of the world. Some  
witnesses back then didn't get  
it. Many today are just as  
bewildered.

If God were to make a grand  
entrance into the world, they  
reason, wouldn't he hire a pub-  
licist and get as much media  
coverage as possible? Shouldn't  
he do something a little  
flashier? What's flashy about a  
cattle stall?

Consider who Jesus really is,  
and it makes perfect sense. The  
shepherds, angels, the over-  
crowded inn, the displaced  
young parents, the star in the east  
— these were not included just to  
add color to the story. Every ele-  
ment is there because God knew  
that to enter the world of fallen  
man, he had to come not in  
majesty but in humility.

We can be easily distracted  
by the fuss and bustle of the  
season, but it would be a crying  
shame to forget Christ. Beyond  
all the tinsel and the lights, he's  
right there.

Be still. Gaze in awe at God  
made man. Adore him. Standing  
apart from the rest of the world,  
here he is: the real Jesus.



# Baptistery making big splash at NOBTS

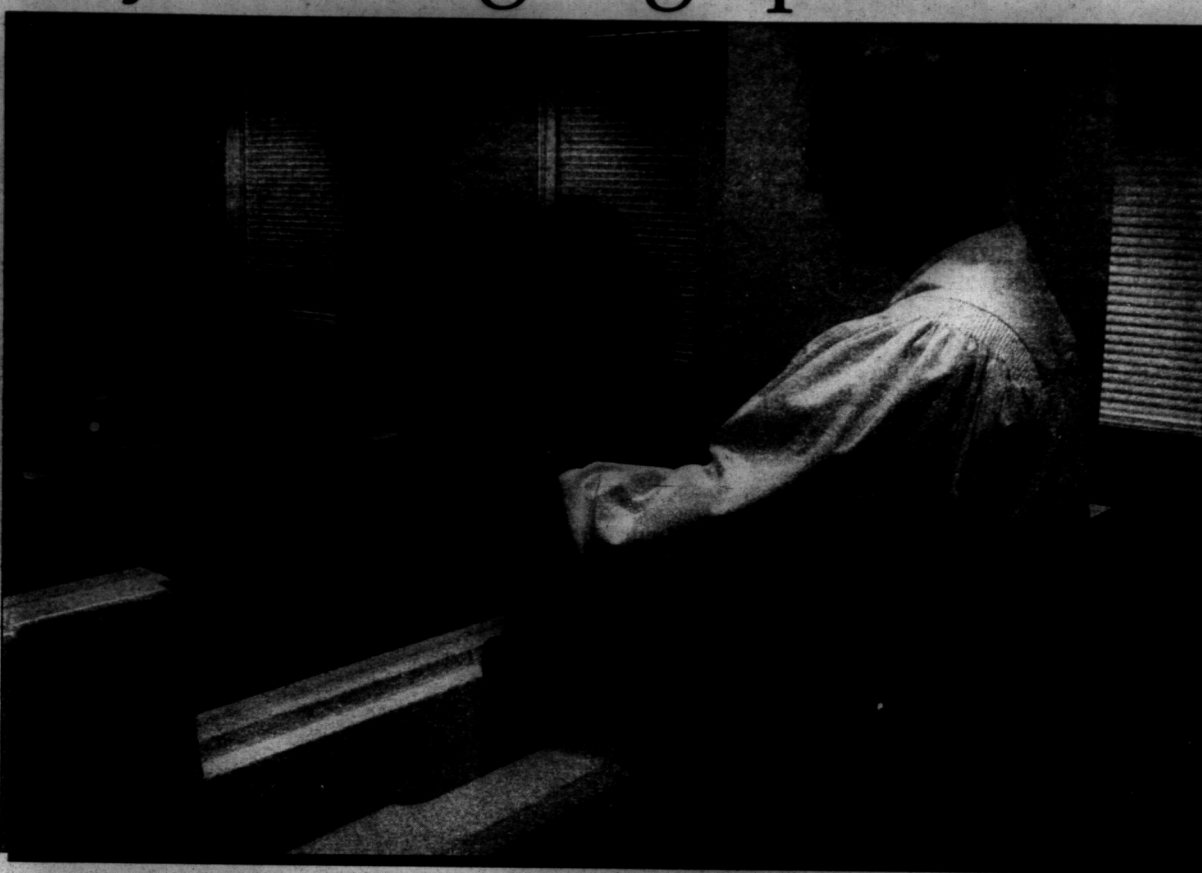
NEW ORLEANS (BP) — Jerry Barlow says the focus of baptism should not be doing it smoothly, but doing it spiritually. With a new classroom baptistery, he hopes to get students through the particulars of baptism and into its meaning.

Barlow, associate professor of preaching and pastoral work at New Orleans Seminary (NOBTS), recently led his pastoral ministries class in baptism training in the school's newly renovated Bunyan classroom building.

With the facility's recent renovation came added classroom features, including a classroom with a full-size baptistery, where administrators envision giving students practical training in church ordinances, along with other "smart rooms" equipped with the latest computer technology.

"Baptism was something I had to learn by trial and error," said Barlow. "We want to give students confidence in the particulars of baptism so they'll be able to focus on its meaning."

"It's a very helpful graphic aid," he added. "When we talk



JUST PRACTICING — Marc Daniels (right) practices a "dry run" baptism on Amy Labella, both students in the Pastoral Ministries class at New Orleans Seminary in which students learn ordinances and duties required in a range of staff positions in the local church. (BP photo by Doy Cave)

about the biblical meaning of baptism — immersion as described in Romans 6 — they can really visualize it."

The new baptistery not only helps visualize the meaning, but also helps in getting through the difficult circumstances that can accompany a baptism. Barlow, also an experienced pastor with several years of church leadership

behind him, said he has experienced several "special situations" in baptism. He shared those situations with students, some of whom discovered quickly how physically difficult the ordinance can be.

One student only partially immersed his candidate [during the class], he said. "Many ministers have experienced that, and it can really throw you. If the water is extremely cold, and the candidate is shivering, how do you handle that? How do you baptize someone with a severe disability? With the baptistery, I can demonstrate a lot that has happened."

The class not only focuses on the actual practice of the baptism ordinance, but also on duties such as counseling the candidate before baptism, working with a baptism committee, being aware of the new models of baptisteries, many of which don't require the pastor to enter the water.

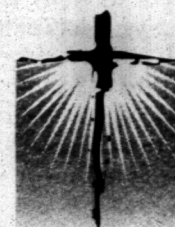
Students say the class has been a great help. Most of the students, many of whom hope to become

pastors in the local church, have never baptized anyone. The hands-on training, they said, will come in handy in their ministries.

"I didn't get the guy under the water the first time," said Marc Daniels, a master of divinity student. "It was good to have something mess up now in class than to mess up like that in my first church."

"I was really nervous," said Jason Sampler, also an M.Div. student. "The guy I was baptizing was about 8 inches taller than I was. It was neat to be able to practice."

Amy Labella, a master of Christian education student, served as the baptism candidate through the actual service, and while she said she learned a lot about how to properly baptize a person, for her the meaning went much deeper. "I was just standing there in the water while Dr. Barlow was talking about the meaning of baptism," she recounted.



MISSISSIPPI  
BAPTISTS

THE  
SECOND  
FRONT PAGE

## WMU book explores crafts

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP) — Even if you think you can't you can! That is Linda Hutto's motto as she encourages women to overcome their skepticism of crafting.

Hutto and her husband, Jackie, have always enjoyed giving hand-made gifts to family and friends. Making gifts is their way of saying we care, get well soon, or thinking of you. Linda's passion is painting, and Jackie specializes in woodworking.

So when Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) asked them to write a crafts book from a ministry perspective, they were eager to share their ideas and experiences. The result was "Using Crafts in Ministry," released by WMU this fall.

Linda, who works fulltime for WMU, said she had only

one concern in writing.

"It was difficult at first to decide what crafts should be in the book," she said.

"As I prayed for guidance, God spoke to my heart about the many needs of his people."

"The primary purpose of the book is to provide women with a tool for ministry," she explained, "so we selected crafts that could be used in different types of ministries."

They also incorporated Scripture passages on each page of the book to reinforce the spiritual aspect of the book.

"God's Word instructs us to minister to one another," she noted, citing Matt. 20:26-28.

Using Crafts in Ministry may be purchased through WMU by calling (800) 968-7301 or visiting [www.wmustore.com](http://www.wmustore.com).



## Record

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### Looking back

#### 10 years ago

Seventeen men and boys from Lee and Pontotoc Associations travel to Galesburg, Illinois, to prepare a former school building for use by Illinois Baptist College. The school recently had the opportunity to purchase the school building and grounds for a permanent campus.

#### 20 years ago

Churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention are showing "the first visible evidence that Bold Mission Thrust has caught on," according to Mississippi Baptist Convention Board executive director Earl Kelly. He cites as evidence increased total church membership figures and a spike in baptisms.

#### 50 years ago

Pastors in Pearl River Association enlist the financial support of their churches to provide theological books and study materials to the African-American pastors of the local area. The Pearl River pastors had previously relied upon donations among themselves to purchase the materials.



## A. Michael tapped as BP Sports writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Ashley Michael has been named a sports writer for Baptist Press, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) official news service, according to Will Hall, executive editor and vice president for news services with the SBC's Executive Committee.

Michael, 22, graduated from Samford University in May with a major in journalism and minors in English and political science.

Michael will write sports features and cover games for BP Sports, a division of Baptist Press located on the Internet at [www.bpsports.net](http://www.bpsports.net).

She comes to Baptist Press after working for [nbcolympics.com](http://nbcolympics.com) during the 2000 Sydney Olympics. Michael has held internships with Sports Illustrated, MSNBC Sports, and with a professional basketball team during a semester-long study abroad program in London.

## Son's first album a 'miracle' for proud dad

ST. LOUIS (BP) — For someone whose doctors never expected to live beyond a vegetative state, 33-year-old Matthew Bonstead has come a long way from contracting spinal meningitis when he was seven days old.

For the next nine years, he had seven brain surgeries — one of which left him unable to do more than move one finger and suck a bottle.

Doctors advised his parents, Paul and Karen Bonstead of St. Louis, they should put him in a home.

"He began to make movements," Paul recalled, "and over time, he got everything back except his sight."

When he was 3 years old, Matthew's parents noticed something else was different about their son.

"We had been taking him to preschool, and one day his teacher asked us how long we had been giving Matthew piano lessons," Paul said. "I said, 'Never.'"

"The teacher took him over to the piano, and he played 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.'"

He had picked up the tune and others from listening to records in his room. His parents started him on piano lessons.

"Remember, this is only one year after he had been a vegetable," his father said.

Matthew also learned how to play the organ, accordion, and harmonica, and he taught himself how to play a guitar.

His proud dad noted, "He has perfect pitch."

As a young man, Matthew, who had completed public high school, started listening to Christian music radio stations. Listening might be an understatement.

He tuned in about three hours a day, five hours on Sundays.

He started collecting cassettes of gospel music — his collection has grown to 1,300 tapes — and that doesn't include the 1,200 Bible study tapes he owns. He keeps track of all of them in a braille catalog. The catalog is

purely for organization; it's not because he doesn't remember what tapes he has. His memory — when it comes to Southern gospel artists, songs, and trivia — is superb.

His father attributes his son's unique memory to a type of autism. Though he's never been diagnosed, Paul said Matthew's abilities are comparable to those of Dustin Hoffman's character in the movie, "Rainman."

In fact, "Rainman Sings Gospel" is what Paul wants to call Matthew's next CD because, he said, the title sums up Matthew's testimony.

Matthew's recently released first CD, "Matthew Bonstead & Friends," was produced with the help of friend and award-winning artist Jeff Easter, who has known Matthew for seven years.

Matthew was named "Super Fan of the Year" in 1997 during the Singing News Fan Awards at the National Quartet Convention in Louisville, Ky. The artists vote for the No. 1 fan.

"Matthew is just a normal guy who loves to sing. He's such a fan of gospel music, and to have a chance to sing with the gospel legends is a dream come true for him," his father said.

The popularity doesn't really matter to Dad. The fact that Matthew has come so far in life that he could record a CD is the miracle.

Paul remembered the first time he opened the box and listened to his son's recording. "Think of how it felt as a father. My son had seven brain surgeries, he's autistic — when I heard him sing, I sat there and wept."

Matthew lives with his parents in St. Louis. Cassettes and CDs are available by contacting the Bonsteads at (314) 434-7887.



THE BONSTEADS — Matthew Bonstead (left) and his father, Paul Bonstead of St. Louis, stop by the Jeff and Sheri Easter booth at the National Quartet Convention this fall in Louisville, Ky. The Easters produced a CD for Matthew that includes his vocals with those of several Southern gospel artists. (BP photo by Stacey Hamby)

## Automatic offering deductions gaining ground

MOUNT WASHINGTON, Ky. (BP) — When his mother checked into a nursing home,

Travis Collins was pleased the short-term rehabilitation didn't interrupt her giving to First Church of Mount Washington, Ky.

The 81-year-old member is one of nearly 20 people or families who have signed up this year for automatic checkbook deductions to contribute to the budget.

"That's one less thing she has to worry about," said Collins, pastor of the central Kentucky congregation. "What we're trying to do is facilitate the giving of offerings."

First Church has joined a trend toward electronic tithing. While the numbers aren't clear, a suburban Minneapolis firm

that processes such payments for 3,200 churches sees a growing interest in the practice.

"The momentum is clearly there," said Len Thiede, senior account manager for Vanco Services. "We're getting contracts every day. We're seeing a huge influx right now, with 2001 stewardship campaigns going on."

It isn't clear how many are involved. An article last year in Leadership Journal estimated 5% of all U.S. churches use electronic transfers.

Since then, one automated giving plan among Lutheran churches has seen a 517% increase in participation, with about 3,100 currently enrolled. Because so many churches go through their banks, accurate estimates of overall numbers are tough to determine, Thiede said.

However, he said so many pay utilities, insurance, and other bills by computerized transfers that using it for tithes and offerings is second nature.

While Lutherans and Catholics are Vanco's leading customers, about 90 have a Baptist affiliation, ranking third.

"A lot of churches are signing up because their people are asking for it," he said. "Word gets around that it does work and more people are satisfied that it does."

Several Southern Baptist churches that have implement-

ed automated giving report that their members have been slow to embrace the new method.

Only approximately 20 families — of an average Sunday attendance of 800 — have signed up at Lakeside Church in Granbury, Texas, since the fall of 1998.

Minister of education and administration Brian Hill said the option began as an experiment that has worked out very well. He estimates that 90% of the participants are senior citizens.

"Those who are using it wouldn't have it any other way," said Hill, who plans to publicize the program more actively next year. "What it could change is the work at the church [office]. There's a lot less to deal with. You don't have to deal with an envelope and we get a report once a month, which is a lot cleaner."

Highland Church in Louisville, Ky., had eight families choose an automated giving option after it was launched. But since then, financial secretary Betsy Neill said, no one else has expressed interest.

"The people who are using it like it," she said. "A few others said they thought about it, but never got around to it. I would recommend it because it's not that much more bookkeeping, and if people don't want to write a check, it's a good thing."

### Viva la festival!

MISSISSIPPI  
BAPTISTS  
Bilingual Initiatives Department  
MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST  
CONVENTION BOARD

### Bienvenidos Amigos Hispanos

Convention Board joined Jose Lopez, pastor of Iglesia El Buen Pastor (Church of the Good Shepherd) in Forest and members of his church in handing out Spanish and English Bibles at the Festival Latino in September at LeFleur's Bluff State Park in Jackson. The department also provided sun visors and issued invitations for Hispanics from 33 Latin American countries who attended the festival to visit any of the 18 Mississippi Baptist churches that hold regular services in Spanish. For more information, contact the department at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3361 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651. E-mail: [esmith@mbcb.org](mailto:esmith@mbcb.org).



# Christmas not joyous for Maluku believers

AMBON CITY, Indonesia (BP) — Christmas may be canceled in Indonesia's Maluku Islands if Muslim extremists there have their way.

As many as 500,000 Christians have been driven from their homes and more than 4,000 have been killed by Muslim "jihad" paramilitary warriors who have publicly declared they will push all Christians off the island or kill them.

The International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention has dispatched a team to Indonesia to assess the humanitarian needs of the thousands of refugees.

One such need is for housing. As Muslims invade villages, they often burn people's homes and possessions. Entire families then are forced to live in an area the size of a typical American bedroom.

The most important need, however, is for prayer, Cole said. Missionaries ask church-

Ambon Refugee Relief, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, VA 23230. Every dollar donated will be used entirely for relief projects.

*Editor's note: Hear Charles Cole talk about needs in Ambon at [www.imb.org/front-page.htm](http://www.imb.org/front-page.htm). For information on a postcard drive conducted by Jubilee Campaign on behalf of Ambonese Christians, e-mail [100675.670@compuserve.com](mailto:100675.670@compuserve.com).*

*Encourage media coverage of the atrocities by e-mailing [feedback@cnn.com](mailto:feedback@cnn.com).*

*Encourage governments to act on behalf of persecuted Christians in the Maluku Islands by contacting the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta at e-mail [jakconsul@state.gov](mailto:jakconsul@state.gov), or fax 62-21-386-2259.*

*The Indonesian Embassy in Washington, D.C., can be contacted at e-mail [poldiv-kbri-wash@erols.com](mailto:poldiv-kbri-wash@erols.com), or fax (202) 775-5365.*



**REFUGE IN CHRIST** — Driven from their homes by Muslim radicals, Christian refugees pause to worship at Elim Church in Ambon City, Indonesia, in spite of their distress. Many refugees have testified that the power of God's love keeps them from hating their persecutors. (BP photo by Warren F. Johnson)

Threats are circulating against the use of Christmas bells or candles in the islands, particularly on Ambon, said Southern Baptist representative Charles Cole. Anyone who displays such symbols of Christmas or Christianity reportedly will be subject to punishment.

This means "basically they [Muslim extremists] don't want any Christmas celebration," Cole said.

Muslim radicals seem to have stepped up their efforts to rid Indonesia of Christianity. Tensions are heightened in part because a major Muslim holiday occurs just three days after Christmas this year.

es and individuals to pray for Christians in Indonesia, especially during this time of year.

"Pray that [children] will have a sense that God has not forgotten them nor neglected them, that they can have hope in him and enjoy his presence with them," Cole said. "Remember [the elderly] as they've seen everything they've ever known destroyed ... that they might have joy within their hearts."

Contributions to hunger and relief efforts on behalf of persecuted Christians on Ambon may be sent to: International Mission Board, Hunger and Relief Fund,



## SHARING THE LIGHT

There is no other holiday where celebration is so marked by lights as is Christmas. Much of the world lights up as Christmas approaches — lights on the trees, lights in trees, lights around the house, colored lights, sparkling lights, spotlights — lights are everywhere! It is no wonder because we are focusing on the "Light of the World."

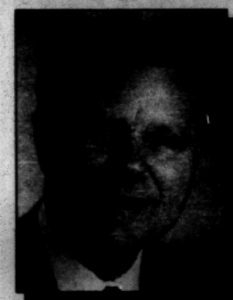
Prophetically, Jesus' coming was announced as he would be, "a light to lighten the Gentiles." In the Gospel presentation, a new light, a star, shone in the East, guiding wise men to come worship him.

I suppose that many of you, like me, listen for and look for very special, heart-moving stories about Christmas that help us have new understanding about this great event.

This year, the most moving reflection on Christmas that I have run across is by a lady named Ruby Swindoll. It is a story of lights and it is a story of the true spirit of Christmas.

Years ago a special activity began in the home of Ruby Swindoll that continues to this day. When it started, Ruby and her husband had three boys, and then a little girl came into their lives.

Their youngest, like the mother, was named Ruby. They were two working parents with four growing chil-



## Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer  
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

dren and they had a very limited budget. As Christmas approached, they found they only had one string of lights to hang. They proceeded to hang them up on the tree with a great deal of joy and excitement. The young daughter was so excited she said, "I wish everybody could come and see our lights." Occasionally someone would see the lights and share in the joy of their Christmas.

As Christmases came and went, the family was able to add more lights to their decorations and the excitement the young girl experienced never diminished. As more and more lights were spread about the house, she continued to want everyone to come and see.

At night she would often sit and listen as cars would come by. She would listen for the crunch of the tires on the driveway as people would turn in, look, and leave. With childish exuberance she would holler throughout the house, "Someone else has come to see the lights!"

As they added more and more lights, more and more people came to enjoy their beauty.

The kids are now grown and the little girl is married and lives miles away, but this labor of love and lights continues. In fact, Ruby, the mother, tells that it takes about three months of their time — two months getting the lights all hung and prepared, and about another month to take them all down.

The daughter tries to get back home to help her mother and dad get the lights ready and enjoy the experience all over again.

Her part of the work is mainly the task of getting the lights ready to put up. She removes the lights that are burned out and puts in new ones. One strand of lights after another, she works along making sure they are all burning brightly.

You see, Ruby, the little girl who is now grown, was born blind. The lights which she shares with everyone else, she has never seen! Since she is unable to actually see the lights,

she works along the strands, touching each one, and is able to tell by the heat if it is burning brightly or not.

Joining to work with her mom and dad hour after hour, the young Ruby recalls the many times her mom would hold up the lights and tell her which one was red, which one was green, and which one was blue.

As she prepared for Christmas the lights to be shared with everyone else, this lady, who has never seen the lights she loves so much, may provide insight into the true light of Christmas, beyond which many of us have ever viewed.

For those of us who have seen the light, not only physically but spiritually, we have the opportunity of sharing the radiance of that light with people we may never see or know in this world.

Throughout December we have been reminded, through our prayerful gifts to missions through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions, that we can dispel the darkness.

We become vital links in the world mission cause and become a blessing to every person who comes to view the cradle, the cross, and the life-giving Savior.

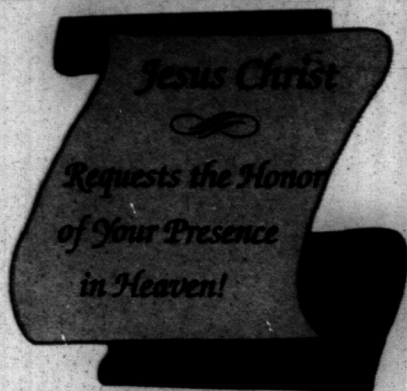
May God richly bless you as you enjoy and as you share the light.

Merry Christmas to all!

**DRIVEN OUT** — Twelve people in Indonesia's Maluku Islands were injured when Muslim paramilitary fighters fired on them as they fled their homes in a water taxi like this one. The people pictured above are refugees from Hative Besar, a Christian village attacked by extremists seeking to eliminate Christianity from the Malukus. Smoke from their burning homes can be seen across the water. (BP photo by Warren F. Johnson)



# Blind man earns doctorate with wife's help



## YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

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(I repent.)
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(I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him.  
(I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP) — Memorizing music by Chopin, Rachmaninoff, and other composers is difficult enough. Not being able to see the music would make it nearly impossible for many people.

When pianist Young-Ho Ahn, blind since birth, graduates from Southwestern Seminary with his doctor of musical arts degree, the accomplished pianist knows he has walked a more difficult road than most and he knows he also had help from a special person, his wife Young-Keum.

Young-Ho graduated, along with more than 300 other students, in Southwestern's 200th commencement exercises on Dec. 8 at Travis Avenue Church near the Fort Worth, Texas, campus.

The graduates also include:

- Mark McClelland, an attorney and former Green Beret who fought in the Vietnam War. McClelland has also been a missionary to Guatemala and worked with Sandra Day O'Connor.

- Zbigniew Wierzchowski and Edyta Wierzchowska. They are from Poland and will return there after graduation to minister. Zbigniew is an artist and musician.

- Sue Yang Dubiel of Korea, a soprano soloist who has performed with the Fort Worth Symphony on numerous occasions. She is married to the assistant conductor of the Fort Worth Dallas Ballet.

- Larry and Beth Cochran. A rarity at Southwestern, father and daughter graduated together. Larry will receive a diploma studies in theology degree, and Beth will receive a master of arts in Christian education.

Young-Ho, a native of South Korea, attended schools for the blind most of his life. At 17, he became a Christian and began developing an interest in Christian work.

He entered Seoul Theological College and Seminary to study piano and soon became a teacher at the United World Mission for the blind. It was there that he was encouraged to study in the U.S.

Before Young-Ho could begin memorizing the music for his juries, or presentations, he needed to have it translated into Braille. Some piano scores are available in Braille from the Library of Congress and commercial sources, but much of the translation work has been done by his wife, Young-Keum Ahn.

"Her main job was reading the materials and translating them from books into Braille," Young-Ho said. That involves meticulously crafting each note, pedal movement, tone, pitch, and octave change. Young-Keum has done this for her husband over the past nine years throughout his master's and doctoral work at Southwestern.

Robert Smith, associate professor of piano and Young-Ho's instructor, said that Young-Ho

has conducted two 20-minute juries each semester. Although some music is reused, Smith estimates that Young-Keum has probably translated more than three hours' worth of music into Braille.

Young-Keum's translations are very accurate, Smith said, adding that usually only a few minor corrections had to be made. Not bad, Young-Ho and Smith said, for someone who has no formal music training.

"I don't think we had more than four or five mistakes in any piece," Smith said. "Those were where a note was off, or an octave change was missed. That was more fun than a problem."

Most music composed in the 20th century must be transcribed by Young-Keum.

"The 20th-century music is a lot harder to translate," she said. "Sometimes, it's too hard."



LEAD IN — Young-Keum Ahn (left) translated piano scores into Braille for her husband Young-Ho Ahn. Young-Ho graduated on December 8 from Southwestern Seminary with a doctor of musical arts degree. (BP photo by Bryan Murley)

Though Young-Ho's blindness presents many challenges, Smith said, it is not Young-Ho's nature to complain.

"Most students struggle to get something memorized, but he can't play it all if it's not memorized," Smith said.

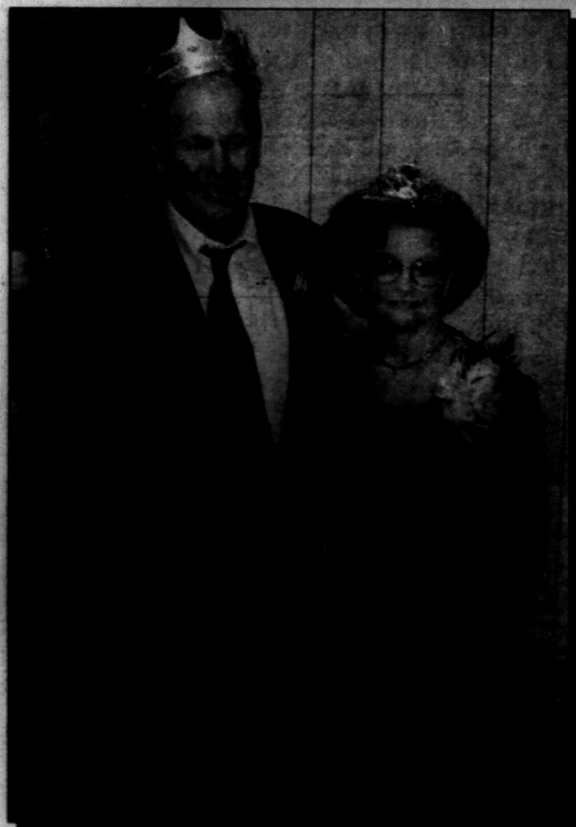
Smith said the challenges faced by Young-Ho were more than just in getting piano pieces ready. Like all Southwestern doctoral students, Young-Ho was expected to write at the doctoral level and to comprehend Turabian style, the writing style used by the seminary.

"His wife was following rules she didn't really know," Smith said. "She had to learn what was needed for the papers."

What some people might call challenges for the Ahns, Young-Ho refers to as inconveniences.

"I'm not finished," she said. "There's still more going on."

## JUST FOR THE RECORD



Mickey and Margaret Manning

GAs of Damascus Church, Flora, recently presented their annual Senior Citizens Tea Party. This is a mission project that the girls started last year in an effort to share Jesus with others. In this project they learned through International Missions that the English people have tea every day at 4 p.m. Some English ladies and little girls use this time as an opportunity to witness to those who don't know Jesus. GAs were Jessica Upton, Nikki Luke, Brittney McBrain, Heather Runnels, and Jade Thompson. During the tea party, the senior citizens selected Mickey and Margaret Manning as Senior Citizen King and Queen of Damascus. "Our church is approaching its 100 year anniversary. Damascus has always had an abundance of elders, but was lacking in youth.

Just in the last five or six years, our youth has picked up so much that we now have five Sunday School classes and five youth mission classes. We also have RAs, GAs, and Acteens," said Pam Runnels, youth director.

Escatawpa Church, Escatawpa, presented a live nativity scene on Dec. 20, and will present the scene again on Dec. 21-23, 7-9 p.m. Candlelight Christmas service with the Lord's Supper will be held on Dec. 24 at 5 p.m. Greg Johnston is pastor.

Pleasant Grove Hill Church, Brookhaven, set a goal of \$7,000 for Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. The church received a total of \$13,938.59. Kent H. Cochran is pastor.

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**Walter Hugh Campbell**, 70, of Las Cruces, New Mexico, died Nov. 11 at home. He was a graduate of Southwestern Seminary with a masters of church music degree. Following his graduation, he was called to Forest Hill Church, Jackson, where he served 11 years as minister of music and education from 1975 to 1986. He is survived by his wife Connie Campbell of Las Cruces; son David Campbell of Houston, Texas; daughter Shari

Riley of Portales, New Mexico; son Daniel Campbell of Memphis, Tenn.; and son Ron Campbell of Las Cruces. He was the grandfather of ten grandchildren.

**Bernell and Dorothy Tate**, members of Victory Church, Nettleton, have not missed Sunday School in 92 years, combined. Bernell Tate has not missed in 44 years and Dorothy Tate has not missed in 48 years.



The Tates

**Springfield Church, Morton**, recently ordained Homer Willingham as deacon. Former pastors participated in the service. Bob Sanderson preached the ordination sermon, and James Watts led the ordination prayer. Frank Lay is pastor. Pictured (from left) are Kendall Winstead, chairman of deacons; Willingham; and Frank Lay, pastor.

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Shaw, The Youngs, Hill, and Sherman

**Paul W. Young** was ordained to the ministry at Crane Creek Church, Perkinston, on Nov. 26. Jim Hill preached the ordination sermon. Sandy Sherman led the ordination prayer. Pictured (from left) are Randy Shaw, deacon; Angela Young, wife of Paul Young; Young; Hill; and Sherman.



Gleason, Carter, Little, Campbell, and Freeman

**First Church, Runnelstown**, recently ordained John Gleason, Greg Carter, Mike Little, and Tommy Campbell as deacons. Pictured (from left) are Gleason, Carter, Little, Campbell, and Henry Freeman, pastor.



Winstead, Willingham, and Lay

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

### SEARCHING FOR MANAGER

Editor:

Northwest Association is searching for God's will in filling the position of Camp Manager/Director at the Ervin Brown Training Center. We request your assistance in sharing this information with others. If someone is interested in this work position, desires more information, or would like to send a resume, please contact me at Northwest Association, P.O. Box 381, Hernando, MS 38632. Interested persons may call the office of Northwest Baptist Association at (662) 429-5033.

John L. Perkins, missions dir.  
Northwest Association  
Hernando

### SEEKING PASTOR

Editor:

Klickitat Valley Church is seeking a pastor. Our church averages about 50 in worship service. We have a beautiful church building in which to worship. There are approximately 550 residents in Klickitat and another 500 in the surrounding area. Klickitat was once a logging mill town.

We are seeking a pastor who is mission minded. He needs to have a love for the lost. He needs to be able to work with the membership while maintaining leadership. He needs to develop an outreach program. We need a man of sound doctrine, supporting the Southern Baptist Convention.

There are many people in our community that need the Lord. We have a good start, we need to continue forward to reach the lost in our community. We need someone to help us develop outreach programs.

Our church is able to offer a pastor and his family about \$600 a month and another \$150 for the Christian work in another community about 34 miles from here.

We are praying that this letter will reach the man that will feel God's call to come here and be our pastor. You can contact me at Klickitat Valley Baptist Church, P.O. Box 192, Klickitat, WA 98628-0192.

Wes Barnett  
Klickitat, WA

### THANKS FOR RECORD

Editor:

This is a letter to show my appreciation for The Baptist Records you have provided to the Bible Department at Blue Mountain College (BMC). Throughout the semester we have enjoyed reading the articles and summarizing them for credit. Each week class members are assigned an article of his or her choice to summarize. Upon doing so, the student learned about a new and interesting subject that would help in understanding more about people, countries, and other exciting happenings. As a

member of BMC, I appreciate you all, and will remember the good work that is being done each week with The Baptist Record.

Michael W. Ellis  
Blue Mountain

### BLESS ASHLAND CHURCH

Editor:

My! I sure enjoy your articles and others in The Baptist Record which make it very special to me. Jim Futral always has an interesting article; so do others. Please keep hammering away on those things you write about and maybe we Christians will wake up before it is too late. We have already sat back and lost too many things that are valuable to us Christian people.

God Bless Ashland Church people and Rodney Manning. This is really what all our churches and we Christians should be doing instead of the many things we are doing. Thanks for giving them the front page. They surely deserved the spotlight. Maybe some of the rest of us will try to be more thoughtful, concerned, and loving toward those like Manning.

Bonnie L. Cole  
Brookhaven

### PURE RELIGION

Editor:

You should never get through receiving letters regarding

"Ashland Church takes on 'God-sized task.'"

Pure religion and being undefiled before God the Father is this, that a man visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep himself unspotted from the world. (James 1:27)

"If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:15-17).

Everett Shoup, a member of the church set this work of the Lord in motion. How do we serve the Lord? He was the beginning of the Good Samaritan ministry and this being a God sized task, he went to his fellow believers, and they felt the same way he did.

What these men did speaks louder than any pored-over sermon, although they are necessary. These three men in the picture are living examples of the Work of God.

If that light behind them was turned on, you wouldn't be able to see it for the light in the faces of these three men and the others who aren't in the picture.

We can only imagine how happy Brother Rodney Manning must be and the joy in the hearts of those who gave!

Ezekiel C. Griffin  
Eupora

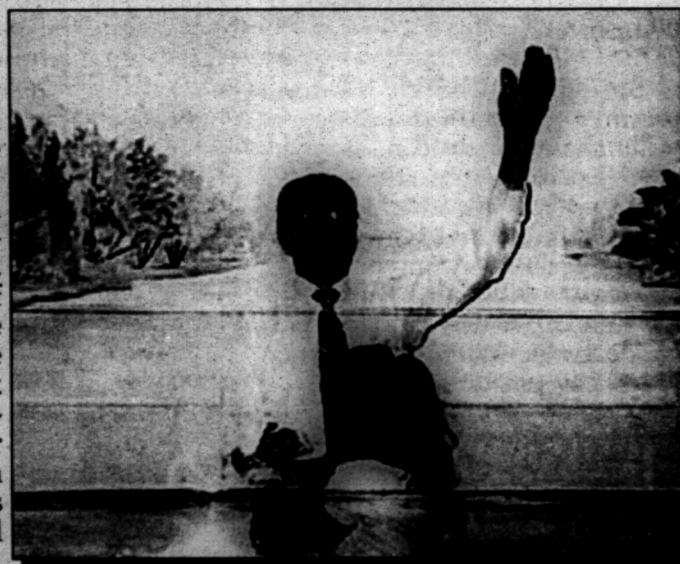
## 96-year-old 'retired' pastor keeps on baptizing

CAPE GIRARDEAU, Mo. (BP) — He has been an interim pastor at least 20 times in the past 24 years. He preaches twice a month at a nursing home and visits folks in hospitals regularly, all the while sharing the gospel one-on-one with people.

S.S. Borum of Cape Girardeau, Mo., does all of this at the age of 96. "He would work 99% of pastors under the table with his visitations alone," said Daniel Hale, pastor of First

Church, Millersville, where Borum was once interim pastor.

"Retirement doesn't exist in his vocabulary; he says he's just changing gears."



S.S. Borum baptizes young believer Jalana Johnson

Borum completed his third interim pastorate for Iona Church in Cape Girardeau this summer. His last official duty was to baptize a 6-year-old girl, Jalana Johnson, he had known all her life.

Her grandmother, Joann Leadbetter of Iona Church, said Borum was a big influence in the girl's decision to become a Christian.

"It was a great feeling to be able to baptize Jalana," Borum said. "It thrilled me when she asked me to baptize her."

The youngster and Borum met because Leadbetter has been his driver in recent years.

Leadbetter has known Borum since she was a child; her father and Borum were both pastors.

"Just keep on going and don't let up," Borum said.

"Forget yourself and keep on going as the Lord leads you," he pointed out.

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## FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

### Responses to Jesus

Luke 2:22-33, 36-38

By Sharon Neff

Do you know someone who is seeking salvation?

So many people in our world are looking for salvation in the strangest places. They think knowledge or money or power or a combination of those will save them.

Some look for salvation in New Age beliefs and practices. The philosophies of great thinkers are seen to be the means to salvation by a number of people.

On the outer fringe are those who seek salvation from beings living on other planets in other galaxies (remember those cult members who committed suicide when the comet passed by a few years ago?). Still others just believe that doing good works and being a good person will bring salvation.

Many of these people acknowledge that Jesus Christ had a great impact on our world and its history, viewing him as a great teacher or a wise man. However, when it comes right down to it, they are not sure that he is the only way to salvation.

According to the popular pluralism of our day, salvation through Jesus Christ alone seems a little exclusive and narrow-minded.

Yet, that is exactly the meaning of this Gift that God sent to us over 2000 years ago. Jesus was the fulfillment of the hope of redemption of the Old Testament saints and prophets and the sole answer to everyone since then who has sought salvation.

Luke tells us of two people seeking salvation, Simeon and



Neff

Anna, who Mary and Joseph encountered at the temple when they presented Jesus there.

According to the law, Mary was ceremonially unclean for 40 days after Jesus' birth and so went to the temple for her purification after that time.

Mary and Joseph also took Jesus to the temple to redeem him. The law stated that every firstborn son was to be consecrated to the Lord for temple service, then redeemed through an offering.

Following the law, Mary made her sacrifice of two doves or pigeons for purification and Mary and Joseph paid the redemption price of five shekels for their son.

Simeon was a "righteous and devout" man (v. 25) who was seeking salvation. He had obviously been seeking in the right ways in the right places because God had graciously allowed the Holy Spirit to come upon him.

This elderly man had been given the special revelation

that he would not die until he had seen the Christ, the means of salvation.

Did Simeon come to the temple every day looking into the faces of the babies and men there, wondering if one of them was the Christ? Did he wonder how the Christ would be revealed? How long he had been seeking?

When the time came, Simeon recognized the salvation embodied in the month-old Baby.

He joyfully took Jesus in his arms and sang praises to God, declaring to everyone who could hear him that this was the Savior, the fulfillment of prophecy, the salvation for which they had been waiting. Simeon had been seeking salvation and found Christ.

Anna as well had been seeking salvation. We know that she had been widowed after only seven years of marriage and had spent the rest of her life in the worship and praise of God at the temple.

When Jesus was brought to the temple, Anna was very, very old. She, too, had been waiting

for the Messiah, the Christ.

Did Anna begin each morning of those many years of worship expectant and hopeful that this day would be the day that the Messiah would be revealed? Did she ever become discouraged?

Anna's years of faithfulness were rewarded when she came upon the little family group while Simeon was speaking.

Here in this Child was the salvation she sought!

Right before her eyes was the means of redemption she had been waiting for. Anna was filled with gratitude to God and proclaimed to all she could find that this was the Christ.

These two were seeking salvation in the right places and recognized him when they found him.

They praised God for the gift of salvation and redemption and proclaimed him unashamedly before others.

During this season when we celebrate the Gift, can we do any less?

Neff is a member of First Church, Greenville.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### Celebrating Jesus' birth

Matthew 2:1-12

By Lee Yancey

Before Mary and Joseph came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. In the Jewish concept of marriage there were three stages.

First, the two families agreed to the marriage. Then the couple became "pledged" after a public announcement was made. Finally, the couple was married and began living together.

Being that Joseph and Mary were in the second stage of Jewish marriage, where sexual relations were not permitted, her pregnancy presented a problem. According to Jewish law, Joseph had the right to divorce her or have her stoned to death. Instead he decided to put her away quietly.

This tells us two things: Joseph loved Mary so much that he would not allow her to be stoned to death and that he was not the father. Joseph must have been devastated by Mary's apparent unfaithful-

ness. In the midst of his darkness, God sent an angel to confirm Mary's story.

Being obedient to the messenger from God, Joseph took Mary as his wife and honored her virginity until after the baby was born. The message of Jesus' birth was confirmed by Mary, Joseph, Zechariah, Elizabeth, the Shepherds, Simeon, Anna, and the Magi.

**Purposeful worship (2:1-2).** In Bethlehem (Hebrew *house of bread*), the Bread of Life was born. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Jesus was born during the reign of Herod who died in 4 B.C.; therefore, Jesus was born sometime prior to that. After Jesus was born, several Magi from the east came and worshiped him. Tradition says they were men of high position from Parthia, near ancient Babylon.

Perhaps they were eastern astrologers who studied ancient manuscripts from around the world. They would have had copies of Old



Yancey

Testament books because of the Jewish exile centuries before. Or like Joseph, Mary, and many others, they may have had a special message from God that led them to the Christ-child.

These Magi from the east, having seen an unusual star, traveled to Jerusalem to seek the

location of the newborn king whom they purposed to worship. Mature believers will purpose to worship God even when it seems inconvenient to do so.

**Hypocritical worship (2:3-8).** Herod the Great was a builder of cities and the lavish rebuilder of the temple in Jerusalem. He was the King of Judea from 37 B.C. until 4 B.C. Given the title "King of the Jews" by the Romans, the Jewish people never accepted him as their king. They benefited by his rebuilding the temple but were repulsed when he built many pagan altars and temples.

Herod was very insecure and would snuff out any threat to his power. He had several of his children and at least one of his wives executed. After the Magi visited him looking for the new messiah, he had all the baby boys two years and under killed in the Bethlehem area.

Herod did not want the religious Jews to unite around a Messiah from their prophecies.

Just look at what many militant groups do in the Middle East today in the name of religion. Many violent wars, suicide bombings, and terrible atrocities occur under the ugly disguise of holy war. A religious militant leader who excited the masses could have easily driven Herod from power.

Herod sent the Magi to Bethlehem to find the child and to return to him so that he too could come and worship him. Of course, what Herod intended to do was kill the baby Jesus. Herod had no intention of worshiping yet he pretended to be devoted to God. Some people demonstrate hypocrisy for social or business purposes rather than for spiritual purposes.

**Joyful worship (2:9-12).** The world under the Roman Empire circa 4 B.C. was a place that was difficult at best for countries that had been absorbed by Caesar's ambition. Nations were occupied by Roman troops, people were heavily taxed, the culture of Rome was creeping in replacing centuries of tradition, and there was a general feeling of inadequacy among those not Roman.

The Magi, perhaps from

Parthia and of Jewish descent, would have welcomed a Jewish king who could swing the balance of power away from Rome.

The Magi found Jesus in Bethlehem when was probably one or two years old. They brought him gifts worthy of a king: gold was a gift for a king; incense a gift for deity; and myrrh a gift for someone who was going to die.

True joyful worship involves honoring Christ for who he is and being willing to give him what is valuable to you. They had traversed thousands of miles through the desert to worship Jesus.

What a sacrifice! They spent months — maybe more than a year — following a star (it could have been the conjunction of Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn that occurred in 6 B.C.) that led them directly to the Christ.

In joyful worship we seek the Savior in the same way and it doesn't take months or years to find him. He is there immediately. The Magi returned to their own country, having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod. As believers we can plan ways to joyfully celebrate Jesus' birth.

Yancey is consultant for the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission.

## Two Sunday School lessons in this issue

Due to postal regulations that limit The Baptist Record to 50 issues per year, the newspaper will not publish on December 28. Sunday School teachers should note that this issue contains the Sunday School lesson commentaries for both December 24 and December 31. Be sure to keep this issue in order to have the commentary for the December 31 lesson. The next issue of The Baptist Record will be dated January 4 and will carry the Sunday School lesson commentaries for January 7.



## FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

### Worthy to be worshiped

Matthew 2:1-15

By Sharon Neff

Do you know how to worship? You might consider that a presumptuous question because if you're reading this, you probably regularly attend worship services and so you must know how to worship.

Well, maybe you are merely an observer of the service, wishing to be entertained or inspired. Possibly you attend out of obligation to your parents or a spouse or even your children. Perhaps you go through the motions of worship, but there's no feeling of worship.

You might offer token gestures of your time, money, and service and walk away believing you have worshiped. Maybe you have even been caught up in the music and message and experienced a time of true worship — a time

or two, but not very often.

What about personal worship? Quite possibly you find it difficult to worship on your own.

So how do we learn how to worship? And why should we worship?

Maybe we can gain some insight from Matthew who tells us of some wise men who knew how to worship. These wise men, called magi, came from the East to worship the baby King.

The magi, who were most likely from the area of Persia, were the scholars of their day, combining astronomy and astrology as they advised kings.

As a group, they followed a pagan religion which nonetheless had similarities to and elements of Judaism. This was a result of the influence of the



Neff

prophet Daniel and others during the Babylonian captivity so many years before.

The particular magi who came to worship the King of the Jews had been greatly influenced by Judaism and the messianic prophecies.

John MacArthur says, "They appear to be among the many God-fearing Gentiles who lived at the time of Christ."

So now, how did they worship? First of all, this worship was not convenient for them. They had to make a long journey to find the King, with all of the preparations that were necessary for travel in that day.

Then they had to really search for him. They were led by God, but encountered an obstacle or two in Jerusalem. Persevering, they finally found him in Bethlehem. We may find that worship is not necessarily convenient, but God honors our persistence and commitment.

Their worship was joyous. Matthew says they were

"overjoyed" when the star led them to the house where Jesus was (v. 10).

Their worship involved bowing down, prostrating themselves before him, possibly kissing his feet or hem of his garment. This was done with joy and happiness at finding the King — not a perfunctory act of obeisance. We should likewise worship in joy.

The magi knew to whom their worship should be directed. Although Matthew states that "they saw the child with his mother Mary" (v. 11), they did not worship Mary.

They knew to worship the baby King, God in flesh. Our worship is to be directed to God, not as a performance for others. He alone is worthy of our worship.

Their worship was costly and involved giving. They brought lavish gifts befitting a king, opening "their treasures" (v. 11) and presenting him with gold, frankincense and myrrh.

The giving of these gifts was an expression of their worship, not a separate act. When we participate in the offering time

at church, we are worshipping, assuming we are not being stingy with what he has already given us.

Giving him gifts of our time and service, done joyfully and in the right spirit, can be worship. Teaching a Sunday school class can be worship, unless you constantly complain about the time it takes to prepare.

Serving in a soup kitchen can be worship unless you serve grudgingly, wondering why these people can't support themselves.

Worship can take place in a church service or in the everyday activities of our lives. We worship out of gratitude that God provided a way of redemption for us through Jesus. We worship because he is worthy.

Genuine worship in light of this truth must involve offering our best — not the leftovers or the crumbs of our lives.

As one year ends and another begins, let us make a renewed commitment to offer him the best we have in worship.

Neff is a member of First Church, Greenville.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### Making a difference

Acts 19:11-17, 23-27

By Lee Yancey

A hub of sea and land transportation, Ephesus was the capitol and leading business center of the Roman province of Asia. Paul stayed in Ephesus more than two years ministering to the Ephesian people.

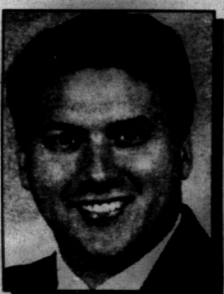
Using the city as a base of operation, he was responsible for the spreading of the Gospel into all parts of the province of Asia. From there, he wrote the church at Corinth to counter many problems they were facing. Years later, while imprisoned in Rome, he wrote a letter to the Ephesian church.

At Ephesus, Paul preached to believers who believed in Jesus and repented of their sins but who did not have the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Paul preached in their

synagogues until they basically threw him out and then he continued teaching in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. For two years, great numbers of Jews and Greeks heard and responded to the word of God.

**Making a difference in broken lives (19:11-12).** Extraordinary miracles occurred as a result of God using Paul in Ephesus. These miracles ultimately led to the Ephesian believers' overcoming their evil and magic.

Paul's reputation as a healer enhanced his position in society. The people did not understand that the power came from God through the apostle. Certain superstitious practices arose as people believed even Paul's apparel had healing qualities. They took his hand-



Yancey

kerchiefs and aprons and used them to touch those who were sick.

The city of Ephesus was famous throughout the world because of its temple to Artemis (Diana). The building was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

The original temple burned on the very day that Alexander the Great was born. It was rebuilt and later burned by the Goths in A.D. 262.

In this culture of black magic and sorcery, the miraculous healings showed that God was more powerful than their cult religions. God performed miracles through Paul that resulted in people being healed physically as well as spiritually.

Believers can seize opportunities to minister to physical as well as spiritual needs of people.

**Experiencing the difference in results (19:13-17).** To say that Ephesus was a dark place would be a massive understatement. Black magic and occult practices were commonplace

with people cooking up magical formulas to give them wealth, happiness, and success.

In the Greco-Roman world, exorcists were also abundant. Seven sons of a Jewish chief priest named Sceva were casting out demons in the name of Jesus. If Sceva called himself a chief priest, he must have been an imposter or a self-designated priest of a pagan cult. There is no knowledge of such a name being connected with a high-priestly family in Jerusalem and the name Sceva is not Jewish.

Because Sceva's sons were imitating Paul and did not know Jesus personally, an evil spirit whom they were trying to cast out overpowered them, beating them so badly that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. This incident led to Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus to honor the name of Jesus.

Believers are to honor the name of Jesus and follow him in faith rather than using his name to exploit others.

**Creating a difference in business and religion (19:23-27).** A group of silversmiths

and craftsmen in the Ephesus area made their living by creating small silver idols of the goddess Artemis (Diana) to be used in worship in the great Temple of Artemis.

A silversmith named Demetrius, who made a living making and selling these idols, was very upset that his business clientele was dwindling because of the influence of Christianity. Particularly, Demetrius was angry that Paul was threatening his livelihood along with many other businessmen in the city.

Because Christianity posed a threat to their business, a great uproar and riot occurred with two of Paul's companions being seized and brought before the angry mob. Cooler heads finally prevailed and the men were released.

Even today, Christians can expect conflict whenever their influence affects the pocketbook of any established business or the influence of another belief system.

Yancey is consultant for the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission.

## Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats,



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Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.



# THE VILLAGE VIEW



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## Gifts of Honor and Memory

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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University Medical Center Students of Dental Hygiene hosted a party for the BCV residents 13 and up at the Alumni house at UMC.

Mississippi's largest family  
wishes you and yours  
a blessed holiday season!



People from all across the state of Mississippi are making sure that Christmas is a reality for BCV residents of all ages.

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FNKASG TAE CAG ELR  
WRNE PLOHL YRGOXL-  
REL, KSE CAG ELNE WRNE  
PLOHL RTBSGREL STEA  
RIRGFNXEOTD FOGR,  
PLOHL ELR XAT AC WNT  
XLNFF DOIR STEA UAS:  
CAG LOW LNEL DAB ELR  
CNELRG XRNFRB.

VALT XOQ: EPRTEU-XRIRT

Clue: F = L

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke Six: Forty-One.

# Documents: Vietnam oppressing Christians

WASHINGTON (BP) — On the eve of President Bill Clinton's historic mid-November trip to Vietnam, a religious freedom advocate dropped a bombshell — 50 pages of secret Vietnamese government documents detailing oppressive policies against Christians.

Although Clinton gently raised human rights issues while in Vietnam, he failed to confront the government over its brutal repression of Vietnamese Christians, Nina Shea of the Center for Religious Freedom in Washington, D.C., said.

A week before Clinton's Nov. 16 departure, Shea released the secret documents, which include instructions for controlling churches, a policy against group Bible studies, and a policy forbidding people to listen to foreign religious broadcasts.

"These documents are the smoking gun," Shea said. "They show that church closures, arrests, and Bible burnings are not isolated acts of overzealous cadres but are the policy directives of the Vietnamese Communist Party and state religious officials. They give the lie to Vietnam government claims that the state has liberalized religious freedom in recent years."

Clinton's three-day visit to Vietnam — the first by a United States president in 31 years — was intended to foster reconciliation and open trade channels with the former enemy. But Clinton also met with the Roman Catholic archbishop of Ho Chi Minh City and mentioned religious freedom in a

statement that America cares about more than trade," Shea said. However, Clinton could have taken more direct action, such as asking about political prisoners or attending a church service, she said.

Though Clinton's delegation included 50 business leaders, he did not bring along a religious freedom expert from his own State Department.

Since late July, Vietnam's government has been jamming gospel radio broadcasts in two dialects of the country's Hmong minority, according to Far East Broadcasting Company. Though Christian radio broadcasts have aired across the country for years, an exploding church-planting movement among the Hmong has caused the government concern.

Countrywide, the number of Protestant Christians is believed to have grown fivefold to about 800,000 in the 25 years since the communist takeover. Roman Catholics number at least 5 million.

President Clinton restored normal diplomatic relations with Vietnam in 1995. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom lists the country as one in which religious freedom is "severely repressed."

Advocates for persecuted Christians say Vietnam is holding as many as 40 Protestant church leaders in prisons or re-education camps. According to Persecutedchurch.org, government security forces frequently harass believers, subjecting them to brutal interrogation, heavy fines, imprisonment, and hard labor.

One Hmong Christian, Lu Seo Dieu, reportedly died in prison in 1999 from mistreatment and lack of medical care. Two others, Nguyen Thi Thuy and Dinh Troi, were arrested and jailed in 1999 for their church activities.

As Southern Baptists prepare to give to their annual Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions, they should be sobered and inspired by the example of Vietnam's persecuted Christians, said a Southern Baptist prayer mobilizer.

"During this time of the year when Southern Baptists intensify our focus on the spread of the gospel throughout the earth and give sacrificially to facilitate it, we must remember that Vietnam is one of those lands where believers often must give their all to remain faithful to Christ," said Randy Sprinkle.

nationally televised address at Hanoi National University.

Those gestures reportedly annoyed officials of a government that severely persecutes and harasses members of the country's rapidly growing Christian churches.

Clinton's meeting with the archbishop "is an obvious



ENDURING REPRESSION — Churches in Vietnam are growing in spite of harsh persecution by the government. More than 10% of the people profess faith in Christ, and the gospel is spreading like wildfire among tribal groups in the northwest. (BP photo)

We can pray for them by first giving Christ thanks for the bold, beautiful evidence of his life in them," he said. "Then let's pray that their faith may not fail in the face of persecution and that as they suffer for his sake, lost Vietnamese will witness his love in action and believe and be saved."

As is often the case, persecution has caused Vietnam's church to grow — the opposite of what the government intended.

For example, evangelist Ha Seing was arrested and brutally beaten in 1996 for sharing the gospel among his Koho people group. When he miraculously recovered from his injuries, 50 people in his village opened their hearts to Christ.

The government also has been criticized for repression of other faith groups. In March, authorities forcibly prevented at least 2 million Hoa Hao Buddhists from assembling at their sect founder's birthplace.

The government proved its determination to frustrate religious freedom during Clinton's nationally televised speech, according to Reuters news service. Clinton's

remarks gently urged the government to consider opening up its political system and strengthening respect for human rights. But each time Clinton touched on human rights, the translator garbled his comments.

In recent years, the cause of persecuted Christians has gained a higher profile among evangelical Christians, said Steve Haas of Persecutedchurch.org. An estimated 300,000 churches in 130 countries participated in his organization's fifth annual International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, held Nov. 12.

The Christian band Jars of Clay traveled to Vietnam with Haas earlier this year, meeting with leaders of underground churches.

"The trip opened our eyes and hearts to the greater picture of the body of Christ and a tangible expression of God's gift of joy and laughter in the midst of pain and persecution," said group member Dan Haseltine.

As a result of the trip, the band produced a video and interactive CD highlighting the plight of Vietnam's persecuted Christians. Both are available from <http://persecutedchurch.org/>.



WORSHIPING IN VAIN — More than half of Vietnam's 77 million people follow Buddhist traditions in the vain hope that their offerings and good works will earn them merit. Another 30% claim no religious affiliation, the result of a quarter-century of communist rule. (BP photo)